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A RUSSIAN 'DAY OF RECOLLECTION.'

THE Russian people are perhaps, of all European nationalities, the most tenaciously conservative in the maintenance of their ancient national customs, holidays, and Church observances. Whilst many of their ceremonies are somewhat interesting, and even sensational in their character to the traveller, none can be possibly more so than the popular holiday known amongst the Russians as the 'Day of Recollection,' or 'Festival over the Dead.' On the morning of the 28th of July, Russian style, or 9th of August, English style, whilst on a visit to St Petersburg, we were informed that this annual holiday was to be observed in the churchyard of Smolensk, situated in Vasili Ostrof. Accompanied by an interesting and intelligent Scot, who has been located in Russia for nearly thirty years, and who, accordingly, knows the Russian language as well as his mother-tongue, we proceeded to the scene of action. We were not long of being made aware of the fact that something of an unusual character was going on in the city. At the tram-car starting-point we found quite a crowd of people collected, most of whom carried well-loaded bags, bundles, and baskets, and looked as if they were setting out on a somewhat lengthened journey. Car after car was loaded and despatched only to be succeeded by others. To escape the crowd, we secured a drosky. The farther we proceeded, the greater the throng became. It reminded us of the crowds we have seen hurrying along to the race-meetings or important fairs in our own country. When we got within half a mile of the church of Smolensk, the long avenues, broad streets, and lanes looked almost solid with people. As the police would not allow our drosky-man to proceed farther, owing to the block, we had to dismount, leave our driver to fall into his place behind a long line of vehicles of every description, and follow the crowd on foot. It was a crowd certainly as big as desirable, but perfectly manageable. Everybody was in holiday dress and in holiday humour. Many carried

large memorial wreaths beautifully decorated with flowers. There was nothing of a sombre hue in all that crowd. The memorial wreath was being borne along as gaily as if it had been a marriage bouquet. It was difficult for us to believe that these people were moving to a field of the dead. Besides those carrying flowers, there were others carrying provisions, bread (black and white), teapots, tea-urns, hot-water urns, and bottles of all shapes and sizes.

When at a crawling pace we reached the entrance to the church and churchyard, we found a detachment of police drawn up. As the people passed through the archway the police moved about in search of 'vodka' or spirit bottles, an order having been issued by the chief that all vodka bottles were to be seized. Having passed this entrance, we now reached the short avenue to the church of Smolensk. Here it was all excitement and a perfect babel of sounds, and in respect of noise and numbers not unlike a gigantic Scotch or English fair of the olden times. Here, however, the comparison ceases. On the right of the entrance to the church stood a large open booth constructed of canvas, supported by poles. It was literally packed with religious devotees. At one end was erected an altar with sacred reliques and 'ikons' and everything quite in accordance with the high ritual of the Russian Church. It was a dazzling, gaudy show of tawdry gold and silver ornamentation in full blaze with tapers and candles. Outside, a good sale of tapers was going on. Within this booth many were on their knees, others were kissing the glass coverings of the pictures of the saints, or crossing themselves and displaying their religious fervour in many strange ways. One man quite as earnest as his fellow-devotees in bowing, kneeling, crossing himself, and kissing the pictures of the saints, carried a formidable bottle in his pocket. On one side of the entrance stood ten nuns of dark, swarthy complexions, dressed in black and wearing hats of various shapes, sugar-loaf and cylindrical, from which long heavy black veils were suspended. These nuns had come from the

remote interior, and were on a begging tour for the poorer country churches. There were men also eagerly clamouring for contributions for certain churches burned down in the interior. Not far off was a miscellaneous lot of lame, halt, and blind soliciting alms. This booth was well patronised ; and the money drawn from the sale of tapers and candles, in addition to the voluntary contributions, must have brought a fair harvest to those who presided over it.

Leaving this extraordinary exhibition of devotion, superstition, and imposition, we crossed over to see what was doing within the church of Smolensk. Within the porch stood two rows of miserable creatures, old and middle-aged. The sight of this abject collection of humanity was positively sickening for its sadness. Round the porch were people engaged in the sale of charms, trinkets, curios, and flowers. The church of Smolensk, which is dedicated to the Virgin, looks a somewhat aged structure, notwithstanding the whitewash and paint which have not been spared upon it. Its altar is a fine one, and of course there is no lack of sacred pictures—gold, silver, and jewelled ornamentation—candelabra, paintings, frescoes, banners, rare old service-books, and other objects of religious veneration. As the worshippers entered, very many of them purchased candles and tapers, proceeded with them to the altar, and after lighting them there, they placed them in the candelabra reserved for such offerings. The church is now quite ablaze with light, and presents a spectacle—as the gold, silver, and jewelled treasures glisten so dazzlingly—which moves the worshippers. The pictures of the Saviour and the Virgin were special objects of veneration, and all eagerly pressed forward in succession to kiss those holy pictures. There were some people kissing the floor of the church, others were devoutly crossing themselves and kneeling. Very few could be charged with remissness. In the centre of the church stood pitchers full of holy-water, around which the people were congregating, eager to get the tin cups into their hands. The water was disposed of in cupfuls. Mothers were encouraging and pressing their children to partake of it, while some were even putting it into the mouths of tender infants. The floor of the church was thick with sand, caused by the traffic of so many feet. A miracle-working picture of the Virgin Lady of Smolensk attracted much attention, and many kisses were lavished on the glass which protected it. Whilst we were examining with some interest this highly venerated work of art, a woman dressed like a peasant approached us carrying a basket covered with a white cloth. From this basket she produced a small phial containing an oily-looking liquid, which she offered for sale. It had been specially blessed, she said, by coming in contact with the miracle-working Virgin, and was warranted to cure all manner of diseases. Strongly she pressed its

virtues upon us, saying, ‘Although you are Germans and foreigners and dumb to what is going on, you ought to make some sacrifice for the mother of God.’ As we still declined to make the purchase, she opened the cork, put some of the oil on the tip of her finger, and was about to proceed to anoint us ; however, at this point we slipped through the crowd and escaped her further attentions.

The heat now growing stifling, the smell by no means the most fragrant—around us nothing but kissings, genuflections, prostrations, crossings, and drinking of the holy-water increasing rather than diminishing, we made our way out of the church to enjoy a little fresh air in the church-yard. The main avenues were crowded. There were priests, police, soldiers, sailors, artisans, boatmen in their red shirts outside their trousers, and picturesquely attired women and children promenading to and fro. There were vendors of fruit, flowers, sweets, and Seltzer water stationed here and there. There was, however, no jostling, no rudeness in all that crowd. The humblest ‘moujik’ was greeting the other by taking his cap off, shaking him by the hand, and from his heart wishing him all happiness. There was the utmost courtesy and kindness manifested by every one to young and old. Different classes moved freely together. There was no stiffness, no formality, no reserve.

The churchyard of Smolensk, we were informed by an officer of police, is one hundred and twenty acres in extent, and the number of grave-diggers employed is twenty-four. We have seen many lamentably neglected and insanitary churchyards in our own country ; we have seen nothing, however, like this. It is simply a wild, neglected field of rank grass, neglected trees, and shrubs enclosed by a hideous wooden fence. There are avenues and roads broad and narrow intersecting it, but all neglected and unkept. The monumental stones are nearly as thick as they can be planted. There are obelisks, flat stones, pillars, miniature chapels, shrines, stones in every conceivable shape and form, picturesque and grotesque, and attached to every stone is the ‘ikon,’ or holy picture. On many of the monuments lamps were burning, and on numerous graves were lighted candles. The most common form of monumental design, however, was the Greek cross, in stone or wood, and in some cases in plain rough logs and posts. There were other tombs like caves, grottoes, rockeries, and mounds of turf of pyramid shape. Some resembled ordinary wooden packing-boxes, others again closely resembled large umbrellas and parasols. The decorations were in some cases lavish, and very beautiful indeed. Roses, everlasting, heather, dried flowers, and wreaths of brilliant colours were lovingly bestowed as offerings and memorials.

As we turn away from the main avenues to wander amongst the tombs, what a remarkable sight presented itself ! In every direction there

were family parties holding picnics amongst the graves. Within many a little grave enclosure, a table stood, spread with eatables and drinkables, and the family party sat round as happy looking as if they were picnicking in the woods. Other family groups were seated in large aviary-like structures made of wood and wire-netting, with tables spread within and seats all round. Within these enclosures feasting with their relatives were many types of St Petersburg society, from the well-clad, highly respectable-looking men of business down to the humblest and poorest labourer, and not a sad face amongst them. This resting-place of the dead was transformed to-day into a scene of festivity. Some tables were covered with the usual tea-party provisions, others again with the more solid materials of the supper-table. Teapots and tea-urns were everywhere. The chief drink was 'vodka,' which, notwithstanding the police prohibition, was too conspicuously present. There is a group, and it is not the only one, seated round a table, well furnished with Russian sausages, buns, black bread, fish, and small cucumbers, and too intent over the vodka. The children are playing around, having disposed of their cloaks and hats on the family gravestone. There is an old man, bald-headed, in his red shirt over his trousers and long boots, seated on the family burying-ground with his aged wife beside him, and before them eggs, cucumbers, and black bread. It is a very strange, yet pathetic sight. It is impossible for them to look happier than they do now.

As we moved along, we heard the sounds of chanting. Here was a family party of men and women, most respectable looking and well clad, kneeling together on the family burial-ground. A priest in deep sonorous tones was reciting or singing the 'panehefa,' or the requiem for the dead. The others crossed themselves, waved their hands, kissed the ground, and seemed intensely agitated. The priest alone stood up, full bearded and moustached, and with long streaming hair. On his head he wore a cylindrical hat of purple velvet, over his shoulders a shawl-like garment of silver and gold braided work, with large gold crosses behind, and in his hand he carried a censer. The service only lasted a few minutes. The fee of twenty copecks (fivepence) was then handed to the priest, who withdrew for duty elsewhere. As soon as the service was over, there was mutual congratulation, and on every face there was an expression of delightful satisfaction. Down immediately they sat together around the well-furnished table, and there they feasted. As we wandered about, the voices of the multitude reminded us of the sound of the sea. Here is an enclosure with eleven persons seated within feasting gaily and drinking vodka.

Changing our route, we came to the finest monument in the churchyard, and, let it be said, one that is kept in a singularly tasteful and creditable condition. This is the monument erected in memory of those soldiers of the Finnish Regiment of Guards who perished in the explosion in the Winter Palace some years ago. The monument is a very handsome granite structure, planted on an artificial mound. It is of obelisk shape, and its top is surmounted by a

jewelled golden cross placed on a gilded globe. On the face of the obelisk are printed the names of the unfortunate soldiers. The decorations are of a purely military character, comprising Russian eagles, bayonets, cuirasses, helmets, swords, guns, and cannon tastefully arranged; whilst the graves are beautifully decorated with wreaths and flowers and strewn with rice. This monument was surrounded by numerous spectators, who showed their respect for the dead and their veneration for the holy pictures near it by uncovering and crossing themselves.

After leaving this interesting memorial, we continued our walk, and everywhere there was very much the same thing to be seen—religious fervour and devotion commingled with drinking, feasting, and merriment. Seated on a little enclosure with his wife and relatives we came upon a burly lieutenant of police well known to our friend. We halted to get some information from him. He informed us that he had some children buried within this enclosure, and that now he was having a glorious day. Turning to the writer, he said: 'Ah, our friend has never seen the like of this in his country. They have nothing like this in Scotland.' When we asked him about the vodka-drinking connected with this Recollection Day, he replied: 'Why, the police order is, there must be no vodka; however, all the same the more vodka comes.' He also informed us that this was the oldest cemetery in St Petersburg, and it was estimated that hundreds of thousands of bodies had been interred here, and that from time immemorial those strange rites which he was engaged in had been observed.

Leaving our friend to enjoy himself, we came upon some flat tombstones sprinkled with rice, and others strewn with black bread, white bread, and hard-boiled eggs crumbled down, as oblations to the dead. There were also several very curious circular and square wire-netted enclosures containing memorial crosses. There is a large enclosure closely resembling a cage in the Zoological Gardens in which three massive wooden Greek crosses stand covered with beautiful wreaths and flowers; whilst seated in true picnic-like style is a merry group of individuals feasting.

We have now reached another church. Beggars are standing round the doors, crying: 'Remember the poor churches in the interior!' 'Remember the church of Michael the Archangel!' Several nuns also, with fur round their long-veiled hats, were imploring for assistance. Near this church we were attracted by an old tombstone covered with written papers. We inspected some of them, and they proved to be the petitions for prayers for the dead given to the priests. Having been disposed of, they were apparently thrown out to make room for others. Many of those sheets of note-paper contained long lists of names of the departed.

Making our way out of the churchyard, we saw near the church of Smolensk a man beating an iron plate suspended from the branch of a tree, as a signal for the people to withdraw. Passing through the gates, we noticed the police keeping a sharp lookout for pickpockets, those plagues of Russian crowds. A 'tractir' or restaurant planted at the very church gate was doing a roaring trade. Outside, the scene was one of great animation.

Every upper window had its occupants. The streets were crowded, the drosky-men in long lines were drawn up, waiting for patrons, and the noise from the innumerable overflowing trattors or cafés was simply deafening.

So terminated this remarkable day spent in the churchyard of Smolensk. When such a holiday as this was instituted, who can tell? It belongs to the dim and distant past, and is a relic of semi-barbarous times. It carried our minds at once back over the long centuries to the days of old pagan rites and practices. We had read in classical authors how the Roman sepulchres were bespread with flowers and covered with crowns and fillets, how the little altar was erected, on which libations were made and incense burned, and how the ancient tombs were frequently illuminated with lamps. We had read of the feast the Silicernium, kept both for the living and the dead associated with it, and how certain things, such as beans, lettuce, bread, and eggs, were laid on the tombs as the *cena feralis*. It was remarkable indeed to find something not unlike this a recognised ceremony in the Russian church, and a living and popular institution in a civilised and cultured capital like St Petersburg.

BLOOD ROYAL.*

CHAPTER XIII.—AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

His father's death put Dick at once in a very different position from the one he had previously occupied. It was a family revolution. And on the very evening of the funeral, that poor shabby funeral, Dick began then and there to think the future over.

Poor people have to manage things very differently from rich ones; and when Edmund Plantagenet was laid to rest at last in the Oxford cemetery, no member of the family save Dick himself was there to assist at the final ceremony. Only Gillespie accompanied him to the side of the grave, out of all the College; but when they reached the chapel, they found Gillingham standing there hatless before them—urged, no doubt, by some late grain of remorse for his own prime part in this domestic drama; or was it only perhaps by a strong desire to see the last act of his tragedy played out to its bitter climax? After the ceremony, he left hurriedly at once in the opposite direction. The two friends walked home alone in profound silence. That evening, Gillespie came up to Dick's rooms to bear him company in his trouble. Dick was deeply depressed. After a while, he grew confidential, and explained to his friend the full gravity of the crisis. For Mr Plantagenet, after all, poor weak sot though he was, had been for many years the chief bread-winner of the family. Dick and Maud, to be sure, had done their best to eke out the housekeeping expenses, and to aid the younger children as far as possible; but still, it was the father on

whose earnings they all as a family had depended throughout for rent and food and clothing. Only Maud and Dick were independent in any way; Mrs Plantagenet and the little ones owed everything to the father. He had been a personage at Chiddington, a character in his way, and Chiddington for some strange reason had always been proud of him. Even 'carriage company' sent their children to learn of him at the *White Horse*, just because he was old Plantagenet, and a certain shadowy sentiment attached to his name and personality. Broken reprobate as he was, the halo of past greatness followed him down through life to the lowest depths of degradation and penury.

But now that his father was dead, Dick began to realise for the first time how far the whole family had been dependent for support upon the old man's profession. Little as he had earned, indeed, that little had been bread and butter to his wife and children. And now that Dick came to face the problem before him like a man, he saw only too plainly that he himself must fill the place Mr Plantagenet had vacated. It was a terrible fate, but he saw no way out of it. At one deadly blow all his hopes for the future were dashed utterly to the ground. Much as he hated to think it, he saw at once it was now his imperative duty to go down from Oxford. He must do something without delay to earn a livelihood somehow for his mother and sisters. He couldn't go on living there in comparative luxury while the rest of his family starved, or declined on the tender mercies of the Chiddington workhouse.

Gradually, bit by bit, he confided all this, broken-hearted, to Gillespie. There were no secrets between them now; for the facts as to poor Mr Plantagenet's pitiable profession had come out fully at the inquest, and all Oxford knew that night that Plantagenet of Durham, the clever and rising history man, who was considered safe for the Marquis of Lothian's Essay, was after all but the son of a country dancing-master. So Dick, with a crimson face, putting his pride in his pocket, announced to his friend the one plan for the future that now seemed to him feasible—to return at once to Chiddington and take up his father's place, so as to keep together the *clientèle*. Clearly he must do something to make money without delay; and that sad resolve was the only device he could think of on the spur of the moment.

'Wouldn't it be better to try for a schoolmastership?' Gillespie suggested cautiously. He had the foresight of his countrymen. 'That wouldn't so much unclass you in the end as the other. You haven't a degree, of course, and the want of one would naturally tell against you. But you might get a vacant place in some preparatory school—though the pay, of course, would be something dreadfully trivial.'

'That's just it,' Dick answered, bursting with

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shame and misery, but facing it out like a man. 'Gillespie, you're kindness itself—such a dear good fellow—and I could say things to you I couldn't say to anybody else on earth that I know of, except my own family. But even to you I can't bear to say what must be said, sooner or later. You see, for my mother's sake, for my sisters', for my brothers', I *must* do whatever enables me to make most money. I must pocket my pride—and I've got a great deal—ever so much too much—but I must pocket it, all the same, and think only of what's best in the end for the family. Now, I should hate the dancing—oh, my dear, dear fellow, I can't tell you how I should hate it! But it's the one thing by which I could certainly earn most money. There's a good connection there at Chiddingswick, and it's all in the hands of the family. People would support me because I was my father's son. If I went home at once, before anybody else came to the town to fill the empty place, I could keep the connection together; and as I wouldn't spend any money—well, in the ways my poor father often spent it, I should easily earn enough to keep myself and the children. It'll break my heart to do it; oh, it'll break my heart; for I'm a very proud man; but I see no way out of it. And I, who hoped to build up again by legitimate means the ruined fortunes of the Plantagenets!

Gillespie was endowed with a sound amount of good Scotch common-sense. He looked at things more soberly. 'If I were you,' he said in a tone that seemed to calm Dick's nerves, 'even at the risk of letting the golden opportunity slip, I'd do nothing rashly. A step down in the social scale is easy enough to take; but once taken, we all know it's very hard to recover. Have you mentioned this plan of yours to your mother or sister?

'I wrote to Maud about it this evening,' Dick answered sadly, 'and I told her I might possibly have to make this sacrifice.'

Gillespie paused and reflected. After a minute's consideration, he drew his pipe from his mouth and shook out the ashes. 'If I were you,' he said again, in a very decided voice, 'I'd let the thing hang a bit. Why shouldn't you run down to Chiddingswick to-morrow and talk matters over with your people? It costs money, I know; and just at present, I can understand, every penny's a point to you. But I've a profound respect for the opinions of one's women in all these questions. They look more at the social side, I'll admit, than men; yet they often see things more clearly and intelligently, for all that, than we do. They've got such insight. If they demand this sacrifice of you, I suppose you must make it; but if, as I expect, they refuse to sanction it, why, then, you must try to find some other way out of it.'

Gillespie's advice fell in exactly with Dick's own ideas; for not only did he wish to see his mother and Maud, but also he was anxious to meet Mary Tudor again and explain to her with regret that the engagement which had never existed at all between them must now be ended. So he decided to take his friend's advice at once, and start off by the first train in the morning to Chiddingswick.

He went next day. Gillespie breakfasted with him, and remained when he left in quiet possession of the armchair by the fireside. He took up a book—the third volume of Mommsen—and sat on and smoked, without thinking of the time, filling up the interval till his eleven o'clock lecture. For at eleven the senior tutor lectured on Plato's *Republic*. Just as the clock struck ten, a hurried knock at the door aroused Gillespie's attention. 'Come in!' he said quickly, taking his pipe from his mouth. The door opened with a timid movement, standing a quarter ajar, and a pale face peeped in with manifest indecision. 'A lady!' Gillespie said to himself, and instinctively knocked the unsmoked tobacco out of his short clay pipe as he rose to greet her.

'Oh, I beg your pardon,' a small voice said in very frightened accents. 'I think I must be mistaken. I wanted Mr Richard Plantagenet's rooms. Can you kindly direct me to them?'

'These are Mr Plantagenet's rooms,' Gillespie answered as gently as a woman himself, for he saw the girl was slight, and tired, and delicate, and dressed in deep mourning of the simplest description. 'He left me here in possession when he went out this morning, and I've been sitting ever since in them.'

The slight girl came in a step or two with evident hesitation. 'Will he be long gone?' she asked tremulously. 'Perhaps he's at lecture. I must sit down and wait for him.'

Gillespie motioned her into a chair and instinctively pulled a few things straight in the room to receive a lady. 'Well, to tell you the truth,' he said, 'Plantagenet's gone down this morning to Chiddingswick. I—I beg your pardon, but I suppose you're his sister.'

Maud let herself drop into the chair he set for her, with a despondent gesture. 'Gone to Chiddingswick! Oh, how unfortunate!' she cried, looking puzzled. 'What am I ever to do? This is really dreadful.' And indeed the situation was sufficiently embarrassing; for she had run up in haste, on the spur of the moment, when she received Dick's letter threatening instant return, without any more money than would pay her fare one way, trusting to Dick's purse to frank her back again. But she didn't mention these facts, of course, to the young man in Dick's rooms, with the blue-and-white boating jacket, who sat and looked hard at her with profound admiration and sympathy, reflecting to himself meanwhile how very odd it was of Plantagenet never to have given him to understand that his sister was beautiful! For Maud was always beautiful, in a certain delicate, slender, shrinking fashion, though she had lots of character; and her eyes, red with tears, and her simple little black dress, instead of spoiling her looks, somehow served to accentuate the peculiar charms of her beauty.

She sat there a minute or two, wondering what on earth to do, while Gillespie stood by in respectful silence. At last she spoke. 'Yes, I'm his sister,' she said simply, raising her face with a timid glance towards the strange young man. 'Did Dick tell you when he was coming back? I'm afraid I must wait for him.'

'I don't think he'll be back till rather late,' Gillespie answered with sympathy. 'He took his

name off Hall ; that means to say,' he added in explanation, 'he won't be home to dinner.'

Maud considered for a moment in doubt. This was really serious. Then she spoke once more, rather terrified. 'He won't stop away all night, I suppose?' she asked, turning up her face appealingly to the kindly-featured stranger. For what she could do in that case, in a strange big town, without a penny in her pocket, she really couldn't imagine.

Gillespie's confident answer reassured her on that head. 'Oh no, he won't stop away,' he replied, 'for he hasn't got leave ; and he wouldn't be allowed to sleep out without it. But he mayn't be back, all the same, till quite late at night—perhaps ten or eleven. It would be hardly safe for you, I think, to wait on till then for him. I mean,' he added apologetically, 'it might perhaps be too late to get a train back to Chiddington.'

Maud looked down and hesitated. She perused the hearth-rug. 'I think,' she said at last, after a very long pause, 'you must be Mr Gillespie.'

'That's my name,' the young man answered, with an inclination of the head, rather pleased she should have heard of him.

Maud hesitated once more. Then, after a moment, she seemed to make her mind up. 'I'm so glad it's you,' she said simply, with pretty womanly confidence ; 'for I know you're Dick's friend, and I daresay you'll have guessed what's brought me up here to-day even in the midst of our great trouble. Oh, Mr Gillespie, did he tell you what he wrote last night to me ?'

Gillespie gazed down at her. Tears stood in her eyes as she glanced up at him piteously. He thought he had never seen any face before so pathetically pretty. 'Ye-es, he told me,' the young man answered, hardly liking even to acknowledge it. 'He said he thought of going back at once to Chiddington, to take up—well, to keep together your poor father's connection.'

With a violent effort, Maud held back her tears. 'Yes, that's just what he wrote,' she went on, with downcast eyes, her lips trembling as she said it. Then she turned her face to him yet again. 'But, oh, Mr Gillespie,' she cried, clasping her hands in her earnestness, 'that's just what he must never, never, never think of !'

'But he tells me it's the only thing—the family has—to live upon,' Gillespie interposed, hesitating.

'Then the family can starve!' Maud cried, with a sudden flash of those tearful eyes. 'We're Plantagenets, and we can bear it. But for Dick to leave Oxford, and spoil all our best hopes for him—oh, Mr Gillespie, can't you feel, it would be too, too dreadful? We could never stand it.'

Gillespie surveyed her from head to foot in admiration of her spirit. Such absolute devotion to the family honour struck a kindred chord in his half-Celtic nature. 'You speak like a Plantagenet,' he answered very gravely, for he too had caught some faint infection of the great Plantagenet myth. 'You deserve to have him stop. You're worthy of such a brother. But don't you think yourself it would be right of him—as he does—to think first of your mother and his sisters and brothers ?'

Maud rose and faced him. 'Mr Gillespie,' she cried, clasping her hands, and looking beautiful as she did so, 'I don't know why I can speak to

you so frankly : I suppose it's because you're Dick's friend, and because in this terrible loss which has come upon us so suddenly we stand so much in need of human sympathy. But, oh—it's wrong to say it, of course, yet say it I must ; I don't care one penny whether it's right or whether it's wrong ; let us starve or not, I do, do want Dick to stop on at Oxford !'

Gillespie regarded her respectfully. Such courage appealed to him. 'Well, I daresay I'm as wrong as you,' he answered frankly ; 'but, to tell you the truth—so do I ; and I honour you for saying it.'

'Thank you,' Maud cried, letting the tears roll now unchecked, for sympathy overcame her. She fell back again into her chair. 'Do you know,' she said unaffectedly, 'we don't care one bit what we do at Chiddington ; we don't care, not one of us ! We'd work our fingers to the bone, even Nellie, who's the youngest, to keep Dick at Oxford. We don't mind if we starve, for we're only the younger ones. But Richard's head of our house now, heir of our name and race : and we were all so proud when he got this Scholarship. We thought he'd be brought up as the chief of the Plantagenets ought to be.' She paused a moment and reflected ; then she spoke again. 'To leave Oxford would be bad enough, she went on, 'and would cost us all sore ; it would be a terrible blow to us ; though I suppose that's inevitable : but to come back to Chiddington, and take up my dear father's profession—oh, don't think me undutiful to his memory, Mr Gillespie, for our father was a man—if you'd known him long ago, before he grew careless—a man we had much to be proud of—but still, well, there ! if Dick was to do it, it would break our very hearts for us.'

'I can see it would,' Gillespie answered, glancing away from her gently, for she was crying hard now. His heart warmed to the poor girl. How he wished it had been possible for him to help her effectually !

Maud leaned forward with clasped hands and spoke still more earnestly. 'Then you'll help me with it ?' she said, drawing a sigh. 'You'll work with me to prevent him ? I know Dick thinks a great deal of your advice and opinion. He's often told me so. You'll try to persuade him not to leave Oxford, won't you ?—or if he leaves, at least not to come back to Chiddington ? Oh, do say you will !—for Dick's so much influenced by what you think and say. You see, he'll want to do what's best for us—he's always so unselfish. But that's not what we want : you must try and make him neglect us, and think only of himself ; for the more he thinks of us, the more unhappy and ashamed and desperate he'll make us ; and the more he thinks of himself, why, the better we'll all love him.'

It was a topsy-turvy gospel : but one couldn't help respecting it. Gillespie rose and 'spotted the oak'—closed the big outer door, which stands as a sign in all Oxford rooms that the occupant is out, or doesn't wish to be disturbed, and so secures men when reading from causal interruption. He told Maud what he had done ; and Maud, who had been brought up too simply to distrust her brother's friend, or to recognise the rules of polite etiquette on such subjects, was grateful to him for the courtesy. 'Now, we must talk this out

together,' he said, 'more plainly and practically. It's a business matter: we must discuss it as business. But anyhow, Miss Plantagenet, I'll do my very best to help you in keeping Dick on at Oxford.'

A NEW WORLD FOR THE CAMEL.

THE Soudan Expedition gave Australians their first important lesson in the uses of the camel. Before that they regarded the beast as an interesting object in natural history, and of a certain commercial value in some little-known parts of the world; but it never seriously entered their heads to turn it to regular practical account on their own vast plains. Over fifty years ago a few enthusiasts endeavoured to excite attention to the benefits which would accrue from using the camel as a beast of burden; the early Governors pressed the matter with spirit at various junctures from the establishment of Botany Bay, and many of the explorers were distinctly favourable to the employment of the animals. But these influences were utterly powerless to effect the purpose contemplated. The population had brought with them a knowledge of the horse and ox, and these they used in their carrying-enterprises over a continent as little adapted in many respects to those particular animals as are the plains of Central Asia. The young men who answered the call to arms in the panic of a few years ago were, however, in great proportion natives of the soil, and although inheriting a fixed regard for horse and bullock, they were not blind to the special uses they saw made of the camel along the skirts of Arabian deserts. When they returned, they brought with them a wider view of things; and while, admitting that much of Australia suits the horse-team and bullock-team, they were equally emphatic in declaring that much more of the country seemed destined by nature to be the carrying-ground of the camel alone. The new idea is growing, and already five lines of camel traffic have been opened up and are in regular work. Altogether, over two thousand camels are in daily march.

Once the camel comes to be generally known, rivalry of horse and ox will in the interior of the country be out of the question. Except on the coast districts, the bullock has almost excluded the horse already. On the great inland plains, travelling day by day over barren spinifex country, the horse was found too valuable an animal for the work before him. The bushman's solid work was done by bullocks. But what sort of expeditions were those trips of his? He yoked ten or a dozen bullocks to his dray or wagon; he drove as many more along before; so that when accidents happened he would have substitutes; and he did his three or five hundred miles in a period, and amid privations and hardships, which almost invariably made a gap in his life. Ten miles a day is a fair average for a team of bullocks. They must be turned out before sundown to feed and water; and if food or water is scarce, they have to be looked after

carefully during the night. The teamster must keep on foot all day, accompanying them with comments complimentary or objurgatory, as occasion requires; or urging them with his long echo-raising whip to dash over a pinch in a hill or a rut in a creek. He is sometimes eight or ten months from home at a stretch, and there are cases recorded when his trip covered over two years. Occasionally he takes his wife and young children with him, and then his life is simply that of a gipsy, with the romance taken out and the hardest of hard work put in.

The immediate consequence of substituting camels for bullocks will be the shortening of those long trips. A camel will do eighty-four miles in eighteen hours with three hundred pounds on his back. To go that distance would take the average bullock team ten or eleven days. From the stand-point of civilisation, this is of the highest moment. It is nothing for men to pierce the desert on a trip of exploration, returning in a year or two years or after a longer interval; but it is a serious matter for a man to undertake the making of a home and rearing of a family while his ordinary occupation is one which keeps him almost continually on the road. But the camel will be also cheaper. The wear and tear of bullock-flesh take away half the profits. Bullocks are stupid animals. Yoke them together when breaking them in, and if they can get a tree between them there will be at least one broken neck. They will walk down the steep bank of a waterhole and drown themselves. They starve in dry country and bog in wet. The camel is, on the other hand, a rational beast. He can find his own living wherever he may be. Forms of vegetation which other animals pass by, the camel thrives on. Thistles are one of his luxuries. Above all, his ability to do without water for a lengthened period marks him out as the true beast of burden for the Australian interior.

Points of objection are, it is true, still raised against him. He is said to frighten other animals. The ordinary stockhorse takes to the bush as soon as his eye lights on the ungainly-looking creature. Cattle flee from him in terror. But that is merely because he is as yet strange to them. Familiarity will remove that objection. When evening comes, the bullocks are merely unhitched from the wagon, and the goods remain as they are until the wagon is hitched on next day and the journey renewed. With camels, each has to be unloaded each night and loaded up again on the following morning, necessitating the periodic handling of bales and packages. This is certainly a disadvantage, and goods often reach their destination in a damaged state in consequence; but there are various ways of lessening the evil, if not of preventing it, and experience is rapidly supplying the requisite knowledge. There are other objections; but taking the good with the bad, the camel remains among the most desirable acquisitions the Australian inlands can cultivate. Over one million square miles of the country are still unknown desert. West Australia alone has six hundred and fifty thousand square miles, supposed to consist of arid plains, salt lakes, and mud-flats, but practically outside the sphere of our information. These wide deserts have work for a million camels; while the

highways running into them and connecting them with the oases of civilisation in one part and another should give constant occupation to at least three times as many.

RALPH THORNLEIGH'S PICTURE.

CHAPTER II.

It need hardly be said that when Miss Macallan again approached Beatrice on the subject of her artist-lover she found her as firm in her purpose to 'wait' as before ; and she therefore proceeded to enlighten her niece regarding the condition of her uncle's pecuniary difficulties without further ado.

She prefaced her remarks by assuring Beatrice that she had not come to plead Colonel Stardale's cause ; she did not want to marry him, and that was an end to it ; moreover, it was exceedingly doubtful whether the Colonel would renew his offer now, even though Beatrice did change her mind. However, it was not upon this matter she had intended to speak, but on another infinitely more serious, and touching them all very closely. She and Beatrice had both noticed how silent Angus had lately become, and how worried he often appeared. Well, the truth had come out at last ; things in the City were rapidly going from bad to worse, and they were on the verge of ruin. A few weeks might see them turned out of this comfortable house, and buried alive in third-class lodgings somewhere in the East End. Miss Macallan did not mind it so much upon her own account ; she was growing old, and it did not matter what became of her ; but her heart sank within her when she thought of poor Angus. But there ! It would do no good harping on it ; the change was inevitable, and must be met with stout hearts. They must show Angus that poverty had no terrors for them, and relieve him of the thought that his misfortunes would destroy their happiness ; for that was what preyed upon him more than anything. She would say no more about the matter.

But Beatrice preserved so stubborn a silence that Miss Macallan began to fear she had not spoken with sufficient plainness, and resuming the thread of her discourse, said a great deal more ; and by dint of judiciously-worded insinuations and assurances, made Beatrice understand that two courses were open to her, and two only.

What they were, required no great cleverness to comprehend ; Beatrice had realised that she stood where two roads met, as soon as her aunt began to paint the trials in store for her uncle.

'I—I will think over it,' she said to her aunt, who showed unmistakable signs of beginning again ; and without waiting for any rejoinder, she fled to seek refuge in her room. Once there, she locked herself in, and sank down on the hearthrug to decide along which path duty lay, and try to muster up courage to follow it.

While Beatrice wrestled with her troubles upstairs, Mr Macallan and his sister were closeted together in the library below : they had been discussing the prospective change in their circumstances, and had come round again to the effect it would have upon their niece.

'I am afraid she thinks we blame her for refusing Colonel Stardale,' remarked Mr Macallan, 'she has been so very silent for the last day or two. I hope you have not been bothering her about it, Elizabeth ?'

Miss Macallan drew herself up, and seemed about to reply angrily ; but somewhat to her brother's surprise, she answered in tones of confidential reassurance.

'Do you know, Angus,' she said, 'it has more than once crossed my mind since Thursday that Beatrice is already regretting her hasty refusal of the Colonel ?'

'I wish I could think you were right,' said the old gentleman earnestly. 'If we could only stave off the crash till she is in safety, I could meet it with a lighter heart.'

'I am certain my idea is correct,' affirmed Miss Macallan ; 'but I hardly know what to do. Whether to ask the Colonel to call again, or—'

'Do nothing,' interrupted her brother. 'Bee is as honest as the day ; and if she changes her mind, we shall very soon hear of it.'

'One never knows,' murmured Miss Macallan fretfully ; 'girls are so strange about these things nowadays.'

'By the way, Elizabeth,' said Angus after a few minutes' pause, 'I almost forgot to tell you. Don't say a word to Beatrice about my monetary embarrassments : she might think we wanted to coerce her into retracting her refusal of Colonel Stardale.'

'Perhaps she might,' mumbled Miss Macallan, feeling rather uncomfortable.

'After all, our aim is to secure her happiness, and a brilliant match is not the way to obtain that for a girl like Bee unless her heart be in it.'

'No,' whispered Miss Macallan, who was growing decidedly nervous.

'So just let her remain in ignorance for the present. If she should wish to recall Colonel Stardale, I won't have it on my conscience that any pressure has brought about her change of mind.'

Miss Macallan could not find words to answer her brother ; she stood in great awe of him, and dared not risk revealing that she had just done what he now forbade. She could not undo it, but she could at least conceal it from him ; and she went at once in search of Beatrice.

'I have been talking matters over with your uncle,' she began, taking a seat near Beatrice. 'And I have just come up to warn you not to mention his difficulties before him. He is so dreadfully cut up and miserable, particularly on your account, that I want you to be very careful to hide from him the fact that you know anything of the business. It would only add to his distress if he thought you had heard of it sooner than is absolutely necessary.'

Beatrice was too much absorbed with her own trouble to think of weighing the motives which prompted this speech. She promised to bear her aunt's instructions in mind, and avoid saying a word which might betray her knowledge ; and relapsed again into the question which absorbed her mind. Should she throw over Ralph Thornleigh and marry Colonel Stardale ?

Two days passed, and neither Mr Macallan nor his sister had received any indication of the

state of their niece's feelings. Miss Macallan had not again mentioned Colonel Stardale nor her brother's affairs ; but she was waiting with no little impatience for the seed she had so carefully sown to bear fruit. Twenty times a day she was tempted to ask Beatrice what she meant to do, but forbore, reflecting that it might be unwise to display too much anxiety. Had she only known it, her niece had already made up her mind, and was bracing herself to take the step which would commit her past redemption. She found it impossible to condemn her uncle to poverty and disgrace, when it lay in her power to save him ; but she put off declaring her resolve from hour to hour, in the desperate hope that something might transpire to save her ; whence or in what shape she did not attempt to conjecture. But Miss Macallan's patience was rewarded at last. Beatrice sought a private interview with her uncle, and told him she had been thinking over Colonel Stardale's offer, and had come to the conclusion she had done wrong in refusing him. She liked him very much—a great deal better than any of the others, and it seemed hopeless to go on waiting until Mr Thornleigh could afford to marry. She thought she had better try and forget him and accept the Colonel. What did Uncle Angus think ?

Uncle Angus was a good deal surprised at her change of mind, but did not say so. He only told her that such a matter as this was one she must decide entirely for herself. She must not allow anything other people said to influence her for a moment ; for he would never countenance her marriage with a man for whom she did not entertain the feeling due a husband from his wife. He would, however, admit quite frankly that if she had brought herself to see Colonel Stardale in a warmer light, he should welcome him as her husband, and sincerely rejoice to see her so well provided for. She had better tell her aunt that she wanted to retract her refusal, and leave her to put the matter straight ; he had no shadow of doubt but that the Colonel would be only too glad to learn what Beatrice had just told him.

So Beatrice went up to see Aunt Elizabeth, and Aunt Elizabeth kindly undertook to do what she could. She was going to Lady Bankfield's that afternoon, and was sure to see the Colonel there. She was, beyond expression, delighted that Beatrice had taken a proper and sensible view of the business, and was quite certain she would never regret it. Of course, it was by no means a foregone conclusion that Colonel Stardale would come tamely back at her summons ; men had pride, and it would be a very delicate subject to touch on ; indeed, she did not see how she could bring it up at all unless he referred to it first. However, Beatrice might rest assured she would do her best.

Of this Beatrice was only too certain : nevertheless, she clung obstinately to the hope that her aunt's mission might fail, and passed the afternoon in awful suspense. When evening drew near she took her station at the drawing-room window to watch for Miss Macallan's return ; her heart stopped beating as she saw the old lady coming across the square, for there was unmistakable triumph in her bearing. Aunt Elizabeth had seen the Colonel, and was em-

powered to inform her niece that he would do himself the pleasure of calling at No. 65 next day. He had been most kind ; and while Miss Macallan launched forth in peans of praise, extolling the Colonel's tact and courtesy, which had made a pleasure of her painful task, Beatrice crept away to her own room. She felt that the sun had gone out.

From that hour she entered upon a new and strange existence : she moved and spoke like one in a dream, without interest or feeling. Colonel Stardale came to renew his offer next afternoon, and she was dimly conscious that his manner spared her all sense of awkwardness, and was grateful to him accordingly. She submitted to his stately caresses without revulsion ; she was simply acting a part, and he appeared to be doing the same. In truth there was something slightly artificial in the Colonel's style of wooing. There was about it a studied calm ; a majestic deliberation ; a total absence of unseemly ardour, which had roused Beatrice's keen sense of the ridiculous before, but now made his unwelcome addresses supportable. Colonel Stardale was too sincere an admirer of Colonel Stardale to have much love to spare for any one else. If the principals were undemonstrative, however, their remissness was more than atoned for by Miss Macallan. Colonel Stardale remembered that lady's congratulations with a shudder, to the very last day of his life. When the Colonel led Miss Cairnswood into the drawing-room and said : ' Permit me, Miss Macallan, to beg your felicitations,' she seized both his hands and shook them until the camelia in his button-hole fell on to the floor, emitting alternate sobs and blessings. There could be no doubt of her sincerity ; but the Colonel was glad when the ordeal was over.

Mr Macallan's mode of congratulation was much more to his taste, though there was a shade of genuine sadness in it. ' You don't know yet what you have won, sir,' he said simply ; ' but I know what I am about to lose.'

The Colonel could not remain to dinner that evening, and Beatrice bade him good-night with something like relief. As soon as he had gone, she went to her room to write to Ralph Thornleigh ; and while she wrote, her apathy fell from her ; she lived again ; she realised her position fully for the first time ; but the recovered power to think and feel left her as she sealed her letter, and seemed to depart with it.

The weeks rolled by, and Beatrice heard nothing more of the disaster she had been told hung over the house ; her uncle was going about his work in the City as usual, and she was fain to admit to herself that there had been a marked change for the better in his spirits since the date of her engagement ; and this was the one gleam of comfort her sacrifice brought her.

Already she was tasting the sweets which would fall to the lot of Mrs Stardale : houses whose doors had been closed to Miss Cairnswood opened wide to the prospective bride of the Colonel, and Miss Macallan, who shared her niece's social progress, was wafted into a realm of mundane bliss which was no preparation for the poverty-stricken trials she professed to anticipate.

Ralph Thornleigh's answer to the letter Beatrice had written him on the day she accepted

Colonel Stardale had only served to strengthen her affection for him. The hardest blow brought out the truest ring. He told her she had done right; that, under the circumstances, she could not have acted otherwise; he knew her too well to believe for a moment that she had thrown him over for the sake of wealth, and his love for her remained unchanged. But this being so, justice to Colonel Stardale required that they should cease to correspond—for the present, at all events. If there had been any wrong, he was to blame for having asked her to wait for him when he saw no reliable prospect of attaining a position which would allow them to marry.

Beatrice had never mentioned Ralph Thornleigh's name to Colonel Stardale, though she told herself daily that she ought in honesty to tell him the truth regarding her sudden change of mind. But she hesitated to make a confession which she thought might reflect upon her uncle's probity. It was impossible to dissociate him from his sister, who had been the real promoter of the business; so she kept her own counsel, and the secret did nothing to enhance the small enjoyment she found in her new life. Matters in the City were at a stand-still in so far as the impending crash was concerned, though, if her aunt had spoken truly, it might be expected to occur any day now.

Colonel Stardale was certainly everything she could have desired, always considerate and attentive, without displaying overmuch affection or appearing to look for it from her. He never allowed a day to pass without coming to Wariston Square; and when Beatrice pled an excuse for declining to drive with him, as she often did, he accepted it unquestioningly with icy calm.

No date had yet been suggested for the wedding, though Miss Macallan exhibited daily increasing eagerness to begin preparations for the great event.

'If you ask my advice,' she was wont to say to her niece, 'I would say, order the trousseau at once, and name the day.'

But Beatrice steadfastly declined to ask for this advice; she refused to order so much as a pocket-handkerchief; and the bare mention of 'the day' roused her from her torpor, and goaded her to the energy of wordy combat, whence Miss Macallan perforce retired beaten.

Then the old lady sounded the Colonel on the subject, and met with no better success. Undignified haste was foreign to Colonel Stardale's temperament, and he baffled Miss Macallan's most persistent representations with his high-minded indifference to detail. His desire, he said, was to study the wishes of his fiancée; any date she considered suitable would be agreeable to himself, provided due notice were given to the world. They might begin to think about it towards the end of the season, perhaps; that was—ah—usually the time when these things took place.

'But the season hasn't even begun!' exclaimed Miss Macallan, now thoroughly alarmed at the bridegroom's bland content with the policy of procrastination, 'and won't begin for a month or more.'

'I am—aware of it,' replied Colonel Stardale with unmoved calm; 'but—ah—Beatrice is not in a hurry; and I am—ah—not in a hurry. At the same time, you, Miss Macallan, have right

to claim some word in the matter. I will gladly leave it to you ladies to decide.'

Thus thrown back on Beatrice, Miss Macallan attacked her again with ominous hints that unless the marriage took place within a month or two, it might never come off at all. Angus would be in the Bankruptcy Court, and—

'And then?' inquired Beatrice, as her relative paused.

'You know what I mean,' stammered Miss Macallan. 'The Colonel would never allow his wife's relations to be disgraced.'

'I understand you,' replied Beatrice, fixing her clear steady gaze upon her aunt. 'I will ask Uncle Angus whether an early marriage would relieve him from his embarrassments.'

Whereat Miss Macallan gasped in alarm, and subsided into frightened silence. She dared not let her brother know what she had done, and could not acquaint Colonel Stardale with their position until he had actually made Beatrice his wife; but if Messrs Macallan & Son could not keep their heads above water until after the marriage, her plans might prove futile, and poverty be her lot after all. She could not venture to press Beatrice further, and found with dismay that she must resign herself to wait until such time as her niece elected to put an end to her suspense.

A few weeks after the engagement had been made known to the world through the medium of the Society journals, Colonel Stardale took a step which was destined to have an important bearing upon the future. It was nothing in itself: he merely asked Beatrice to accompany him to his own particular man, Mr Gustav Schenks, to be photographed: she did so, and the result was a master-piece of portraiture. Had the Colonel remained satisfied with that, this chronicle had never been written; but some imp of mischief suggested that he should have it copied life-size in oils, and the Colonel adopted the idea on the spot. Such a picture, he thought, would form a graceful addition to the wedding gifts he had already ordered; and by having it painted from the photograph, the matter could be kept secret from Beatrice, who would doubtless appreciate it the more if it came as a surprise.

The first thing to be done was to find an artist. The Colonel numbered among his friends some of the greatest painters of the day; but he knew well that it was all an ordinary mortal's life was worth to ask one of them to paint from a photograph: he might as well ask their services to paint a signboard for a tavern. Moreover, painters of repute are prone to take their own time over commissions, however exalted the rank of their patrons; and this picture must be ready before the wedding day.

Could Mr Schenks help him? The great photographer shook his head; he was much grieved to deny anything to so valued a customer as the Colonel, but such business was quite beyond his sphere. Colonel Stardale was disappointed, thinking, with reason, that inasmuch as he was photographed in Mr Schenks' studio in about nine different attitudes at every change of the moon, that artist ought to stretch a point to oblige him.

Mr Schenks did reconsider the matter when it was laid before him in this light, and undertook

to make inquiries about a painter to whom the commission might be entrusted. His diligence was crowned with success : a couple of days later he wrote to say that he had obtained the name and address of a young artist who did work of this description, and who would gladly undertake the Colonel's order on moderate terms. His address was No. 210 Wenside Street, Holborn, and his name was Ralph Thornleigh.

THE CALENDARS.

FROM the most casual glance at a planisphere or celestial globe one is led to associate the noble and sublime science of astronomy with shepherd life. In the pastures of the newly-created world the first human beings had very little society, and all they saw from day to day was their flocks grazing and frisking about them. There were several signs, however, by means of which, if they were only observant, they could have roughly calculated the flight of time. Thus the departure of the birds in the autumn and the fall of the leaves warned them of the approach of winter, and fixed an epoch recurring with periodic regularity. But in their wanderings in search of new pastures, the necessity of an unerring guide became of paramount importance, and naturally the heavenly bodies came to be adopted as a great compass or wondrous directing and date-marking machine, fixing the regular periodic flow of time. Thus the heliacal rising of one certain star heralded the advent of the shearing season, while the appearance of the Pleiades in the east preluded the seedtime ; and thus two dates of the utmost importance to a primitive and pastoral people came to be fixed. And as in this simple astronomy the shepherds traced the annals of the stars among their flocks and herds, so in like manner they traced the history of their flocks among the stars.

Thus the course of the sun came to lie amid sheepfolds and their surroundings. At one time of the year the zodiacal constellation Taurus, the bull, the lord of the herd, marked where 'the father of day' was located. At another time the Ram, the master of the fold, served to designate his position.

The lion, the terror of herdsmen, was also placed in the sky, together with the dreaded scorpion ; and besides these concomitants of the life of a shepherd, he placed likewise above him still dearer associations, such as the children of his household, Gemini ; the virgin, Virgo ; the ear of corn, Spica Virginis ; and his instruments of husbandry, the Plough and the Sickle.

The best possible proof of how far the stars had entered into the life of man may be found in the worship of the Sabaeans of antiquity, who adored the starry hosts as Infinite God. But this epoch of mystery evidently preceded the dawn of observation, and the most important period in connection with the subject of time-measuring commenced when men began to turn the celestial

sphere into a mighty rustic habitation, modelled on the basis of their own immediate surroundings.

Even the dog, the type of watchfulness, was translated to the heavens ; the bright star Sirius, whose heliacal rising in the days of ancient Egypt presaged the overflowing of the Nile, a periodic event of the greatest national importance.

Thus, from the earliest times the heavenly bodies in their seasons have been regarded as grand time-measurers ; but long before the stars had been observed for astrological or other purposes, the sun and moon more intimately connected with man's existence came to be regarded as time-marking machines ; and it is on the motions of these two celestial bodies that all Calendars have been based.

It would be reasonably expected that the sun, which is the great source and supporter of life upon the earth, and the regulator of the seasons, would be generally adopted as a measurer of time ; but men were also struck by the constant and regular return of the phases of the moon, and from this fact they were led to use the moon as the basis for their calendar.

The Mussulman year is purely lunar, and consists of the period embraced by twelve revolutions of the moon around the earth, or three hundred and fifty-four and one-third days. The Israelites never adopted the solar year, not even when they lived so long in the land of Egypt, for we find them, so soon as they were settled in the Promised Land, using the lunar month and the lunar year. The ancient Jewish year had only three hundred and fifty-four days ; twelve days were added sometimes at the end of the year, and sometimes a month of thirty days after the month Adar, in order to bring it into agreement with the solar year. But the Jewish calendar received a reform in the fourth century after the Christian era, and it is this improved calendar which is used by the Jews of our day for fixing their festivals and religious ceremonies. It is extremely ingenious, and is based on the course of the moon. The year is composed of twelve lunar months when common, and of thirteen lunar months when embolismic ; and these years succeed each other in such a way that after a period of nineteen years the commencement of the Jewish year arrives at the same epoch as the solar year. The Jewish year is therefore a lunar-solar year ; and the civil year of this remarkable people, in common with all Oriental nations, commences with the new moon of September, and the ecclesiastical year at the new moon in March.

The Egyptians, who reached a high state of civilisation in the dim twilight of remote antiquity, calculated the year as consisting of three hundred and sixty days, or twelve months of thirty days. In the pursuit of astrology—that vain attempt to evolve the secret of the supposed mystic connection between the celestial bodies and the destiny of man—the Egyptians were unconsciously laying the groundwork of the sublime science of astronomy ; and in a period of continued observation they found that the year of three hundred and sixty days fell short of a true solar year by five days. This new year came into force and commenced on the 26th of February 747 B.C., and this day was the

beginning of the era of Nabonassar. The year of three hundred and sixty-five days was followed for a period of seven hundred and twenty-three years; but in the year 25 B.C. a supplementary day was added every four years, and this year of three hundred and sixty-five and one-fourth days became a fixed year, and was adopted by the Romans when they conquered Egypt. This year was also adopted by the Copts, and the first year of the era of the martyrs commenced on the 29th of August 284 A.D.

The Greeks, the most cultured of the nations of antiquity, were rather slow to turn their powers of observation to the sky. They employed at first—borrowing from the Egyptians and the Babylonians—the year of three hundred and sixty days, divided into twelve months of thirty days. Each month consisted of three decades; and this is the sole example in ancient history of a week of ten days. Meton of Athens in 432 B.C., having observed the summer solstice, found that a period of nineteen solar years contained two hundred and thirty-five lunations exactly, and that at the end of this period the sun and the moon returned to the same point in the heavens. This discovery was considered so important, that an account of it was carved in letters of gold upon the temple of Minerva, and hence the origin of what is generally known as the Golden Number. For the purposes of chronology, the Greeks counted the years by means of Olympiads; the first Olympiad occurred 776 B.C., and the last in the year 440 of the Christian era.

The Roman year, as instituted by Numa and regulated by the moon, consisted of three hundred and fifty-five days, divided into twelve months of unequal length. But this year of three hundred and fifty-five days did not correspond to the periodic return of the seasons, and in the time of Julius Caesar the Roman calendar had fallen into great disorder. To correct this confusion, Caesar sought the assistance of Sosigenes, a distinguished astronomer of Alexandria; and it was decided that the civil year should consist of three hundred and sixty-five days, six hours—in other words, that there should be three consecutive years of three hundred and sixty-five days, and that the fourth should contain three hundred and sixty-six days, the extra day being intercalated between the 23d and the 24th of February; and as the 24th was the sexto calendae—six days prior to the 1st of March inclusive—the additional day was called bis-sexta-calendae; hence the origin of our word bissextile. This change took place in the year 44 B.C.; and to correct the disorders in the calendar, it was necessary that the previous year should consist of four hundred and forty-five days. The Julian year is still actually followed by the Russians, Greeks, and some Oriental Christians.

The year as fixed by Julius Caesar being fully eleven minutes longer than the true solar year, another change was made in the year 1582, when Pope Gregory XIII. ordered that Thursday the 4th of October 1582 should be followed by Friday the 15th of October. This, as it has been called, the New Style, was not adopted in England till the year 1752. The quarter days are Christmas, Lady Day, Midsummer, and Michaelmas; so, when the New Style came into operation, these

days were advanced, so to speak, eleven days, and thus became the 5th of January, April, and July, and the 10th of October—most important days in connection with Stock and Annuity business.

RUBE THE RATCATCHER.

IT is milking-time at Hayling's Farm. In the warm, quiet, sunny atmosphere you can hear distinctly the tinkling of the milk as it falls into the pails, and the clink of the buckets as the milkers every now and then get up and go to a fresh cow. The warm afternoon sun is shining in at the cowhouse door, and the cows are standing peacefully flicking their tails, to keep off the intrusive flies that come in and settle on them. Every now and then the cart-horses move in the stable, rattling their head-pieces as they pull the hay out of the racks above their heads. Up by the farmhouse the two sheepdogs that are chained across the path to keep away tramps are lying flat out on its sun-warmed stones. On the roof of the granary, pigeons of every colour are bowing and strutting—blue rocks the colour of the bloom on a plum; white fantails arching their necks and spreading their tails; red ones with the shifting colours on their necks turning from green to purple, from purple to blue, with every turn of their heads in the sun. They fill the air with their low monotonous cooing—a peaceful sound on a hot summer's afternoon. As they all fly down past the kitchen window, presently the sun on the fantails' white feathers is so dazzling that they flash a bright reflection into the room; they settle on the path, and begin to peck about.

By-and-by a cart drawn by a bony old white horse comes rattling down the lane and stops at the farm-gate, and a man gets out and enters the farmyard. The old horse immediately goes off to the hedge and begins to munch the long grass in it. Inside the cart is a disreputable-looking terrier, with one eye closed up from a swelling over it where a rat has caught him. He sits up in the cart with his head rather on one side, and one ragged ear cocked, listening to the barking of the two sheepdogs, that had woken up from their slumbers directly the cart stopped, and are now dancing round on the ends of their chains, barking furiously at the man as he comes through the farmyard and up the little path. He pauses when he reaches them; then, seeing that they cannot get quite across the path, slips past them, and goes up to the door. The pigeons fly up with a brilliant flash of colours as he does so. He is a thin, middle-sized man, with pale red hair, and light eyelashes, under which his eyes, that are much the darkest thing about him, have a curious, shifty, humorous expression. He is clad in ragged whitish-brown clothes, that give him the appearance of a very untidily-tied-up brown-paper parcel. He taps gently with his knuckles on the door—a tap that is as fugitive as his face—then turns round and looks down the path and at the two long narrow borders on either side of it, in which lilies, cabbage-roses, bachelor's buttonholes, lavender, lad's love, and white pinks, are mingling their gay colours and filling the air with fragrance. Then he shuffles with his feet, and makes faces at the two dogs, that are still

straining at their chains and barking, making them more furious than ever. No notice being taken of his tap, he knocks again, this time a little louder; then, as still no one comes, he goes and looks under the flapping butter-cloth that hangs over the dairy window to keep out the sun and dust.

The dairy looks deliciously cool this hot afternoon with its fresh whitewashed walls and damp stone floor, over which buckets of icy-cold water from the deep well outside are thrown constantly, to keep the air cool. In one corner stands a quantity of cream jars of all shapes and sizes, some of pale rough red pottery, others of rich shiny red brown with pale yellow linings. On the shelf of deal, white with constant scrubbing, that runs round the dairy, stand great primrose-coloured milkpans, filled with milk; and one shelf is covered with pots of fresh deep yellow butter ready for to-morrow's market. The very sight of such a dairy carries one's thoughts away to the low-lying meadows, where the cows are standing knee-deep in the long grasses, on which the white clouds throw swift shadows as they pass, and every breeze that blows by takes away with it a warm milky fragrance; where the swallows are flying low, and the only sounds are the cows' deep sighs of contentment and quick cropping of the sweet dewy pasture. The sight of the yellow butter in conjunction with a smell of hot cake that is issuing from the kitchen apparently, from the expression of his face, suggests to Rube the ratcatcher that he is very hungry, and he drops the corner of the butter-cloth and turns away again. Then he goes and looks through the lattice window into the kitchen. The stone floor has evidently just been freshly whitened and the hearth swept; the kettle is boiling away briskly; but the room is quite unoccupied, save for a great black cat that is sitting blinking dreamily at the red coals.

Going back to the door, Rube begins to knock on it in good earnest; when it is pulled open from the inside and the mistress of the farm confronts him. 'Gracious! Rube, have you never been kept waiting before a moment, that you put yourself into such a flying stare. I declare you made noise enough to wake the dead!'

Rube looks at her with a sly twinkle under his flickering eyelashes. 'I knocked and I knocked,' he says, touching his hat and bobbing at every other word, 'and I got quite anxious. I did say I thought zummat must ha'e bin the matter with you, and I was just agwine to call out!—

'None of your nonsense, Rube; you knocked three times, for I heard you.'

Rube only grins imperturbably.

'Well, what do you want?'

'I yeard as you've a terble lot o' ratses about, and I come to see if you'd like vur me to come over with my doags and fer'ts one day.'

'Well, they are a nuisance. They rob my hens' nests and carry off my young chickens. I don't know but that 'twould be as well for you to come. I'll think about it, and let you know.'

'Better make up your mind at once, ma'am,' says Rube persuasively. 'I've a rare handy tARRIER; I'll warnt he will polish 'em off. I've bin up along to Farmer Abel's all the afternoon, and he killed three dozen in a hour.'

'Now, don't you try to gammon me, Rube; I've known your yarns too long.'

Rube passes this by as though he does not hear. 'It be ter'ble dry work, rattin' be,' he says reflectively, looking past Mrs Hills, and fixing his eyes on the key of the beer, which hangs on a hook on the dresser.

'Ah!' says Mrs Hills pointedly, 'you finds it so, if all the tales one hears be true.'

'Don't you believe all the tales you years, ma'am,' replies Rube, unabashed. 'Zome volks be that primed with spiteful tales about their neighbours, as they'd bust if they didn't let zome o' em out.'

At this moment, Joseph, the milkman, comes up the little path with a bucket of warm foaming milk in each hand. He is a tall old man, with a long shrewd weather-beaten face. He looks sharply at Rube as he passes into the dairy, where he begins pouring the milk into the pangs, keeping his ears well open to the conversation outside. Mrs Hills is just fixing a day, when her attention is caught by a loud whisper behind her of 'Missus!'. She looks round to see Joseph contorting his face into the most extraordinary grimaces. He beckons to her with a long forefinger, keeping well out of Rube's sight.

'Whatever's the matter, Joseph?' asks Mrs Hills, going up to him.

'Don't you hev that 'ere Rube, Mis' Hills,' he whispers, still grimacing and nodding his head; 'he puts down more ratses than ever he kill, I'll warn't he do.'

'What do you mean, Joseph?'

But Joseph only winks solemnly, wags his head, points at the door, and lays his finger on his lips.

Rube, outside, is vainly endeavouring to catch what is being said; there is something the same expression on his face as that of the cock-eared terrier in the cart.

'Rube! Now I think of it,' says Mrs Hills, coming out to the door again, 'I can't have you, after all; your dogs would make such a rout with the fowls; and I never could bear ferrets—nasty crawlly things. You might let one of 'em go, and I should never be able to sleep abed again.'

Rube made a pretty shrewd guess as to Joseph's share in this sudden dislike to ferrets; but he took it very coolly; he touched his hat to Mrs Hills; gave Joseph, who had come out again with his clinking pails, a calm wink, and walked off.

'What did you mean, Joseph?' asked Mrs Hills, watching him.

'Why, it be like this yere. T'other day he went over to Farmer Hollis's rattin', and he zhuts hisself into the barn wi' all his doags and fer'ts. "Wait a bit," says he, "and I'll soon get 'em out," says he; and he zhuts to the barn-doors. Wull, arter a minute or two, Muster Hollis years a gurt n'ise gwin' on inzide, him a hollerin' "Hilloo! Hilloo!" like mad; and he goes and look drough the air-hole into the barn, and then he zees the whule chap a-pullin' the ratses out o' his pockets and drownin' 'em down and shoutin' out "Hilloo! Hilloo! Hilloo!" like as though they was a-comin' out o' the walls, and he was a-zettin' the doags at 'em!'

In the meantime Rube had gone out through the farm-gate into the road again, where he found the old horse had eaten a great patch clear in the

hedge. After he had turned the horse round, he got into the cart and rattled up the lane again. As he drove along, the racketty old cart swaying from side to side, and the old horse stepping out with such high action that his knees were nearly as high as his long Roman nose, every one he met had a nod or word for him. 'Well, Rube, how be the world agwine with you?' called one man as he passed.

'Oh! shall soon hae enough to retire on the Contimong!' replied Rube airily.

Rube the ratcatcher had begun life as a doctor's coachman; but his career in that capacity had been soon cut short through his incorrigible laziness. After that, he took to doing odd work; then he married a widow from the workhouse with six children—'to better hisself,' he said—on which occasion he had come out gorgeously attired in a blue coat with brass buttons, and light gray trousers, that he had borrowed from a young farmer for whom he worked, as he wished to 'look like a gennelman for once in's life.' The marriage turned out a very happy one; and they managed to keep their heads above water somehow, she by taking in washing; and he by ratting, clipping horses, driving pigs, and hiring out the old horse, which he supported by begging a little hay or straw here and there at the farms round, cutting grass from the hedges, or tearing it out on pieces of waste ground, while he sat in the hedge, generally accompanied by half-a-dozen children, smoking his pipe, and keeping guard over it—an occupation that just suited him. Each season in turn gives something, for he knows the sunny copse, or sheltered bank of the silently stealing watercourse, where the first primroses come out; and later, when they are plentiful, where to search among the nettles and moist dead leaves of last year for the dewy white violets and their pale blue sisters. Again, when every country lad has a bunch of them in his cap, he leaves them to gather the slender-stemmed cowslips and the bluebells. He knows, too, the tangled copse where the first marsh marigolds blow, glowing like cups of purest gold above the peaty waters of the brook, as it glides slowly along under the brambles. And now his flower-harvest is nearly over, for everywhere there is a faint scent of flowers opening. The amber-cinctured bees are busy the livelong day; the milk-white cuckoo-flowers are pushing up to greet their namesake; the spotted-leaved orchis-flower stands tall amongst the grass; the buttercups are so thick that the meadows look shot with gold; and the dwellers in the little market-town where Rube sells his flowers can fill their hands as full as they list in the course of a country evening stroll.

By-and-by come the mushrooms, and Rube wanders for miles over the downs searching for them carefully, avoiding the 'fairy rings' as he does so, for he is deeply superstitious, and fancies that any one who steps into a fairy ring passes under the influence of the fairies. There is a spot on a particularly lonely and bleak part of these downs around which is some dark story. It is very far back, and nobody knows exactly what it is; but there are vague tales of sights seen there and sounds heard. The Deadman's Ridge it is always called; for it is a mound rising suddenly, covered at the top with a great patch of weeds. The country-folks associate these weeds with the

story; for 'If you buries a pig or a hoss in a field, don't nettles and weeds come as thick as can be; and so 'twould be wi' a man,' they say.

The foot of man is hardly ever heard there, for the shepherds shun it, and not even a poacher will come, for it is lonely enough by day; and it must be dreadfully so by night, when the moon is silverying the downs, and the wind-blown trees and tall weeds are throwing wavering, mysterious shadows. Only the bat flits over it, or the owl glides by, showing dimly through the gloom; or, by day, the swallow skims past; or a sheep, straying from the flock, stops to nibble for a moment at the long rank herbage, then goes bleating off again. And in winter, when the wind is driving up icy from the snow-fields it has blown over, sweeping the desolate downlands, and sending a shower of snow-flakes in front of it, or whirling up a few dead leaves, its loneliness will remain unbroken for days at a time, save when sometimes a seagull will float by, coming inland from where the sea heaves dark and sullen.

About this spot Rube has one of his favourite stories. 'I was gwine athart the Deadman's Ridge, a-musherrunning, one day, when I seed a gurt white hoss come a-gallopin' along the down wi' fire blowin' out vrom's nose and s's hoofs like as though they'd just a come off o' John Saunders' anvil, and scritching like as though he'd a got summat ter'ble the matter wi' un. And when I seed un, I yell on my vase as vlat as a Chale Bay mackerel; and when I gets up again, there warn't nothin' to be seen, only the grass looked zort of zinged like.'

On wintry nights, when Rube tells this tale, leaning out of the dark chimney corner of the *Golden Lion*, the firelight lighting up his curious white face, and the pupils of his eyes dilating like a cat's, there is always a scroop of chairs moving on the stone floor, as every one hitches his a little nearer, with an uncomfortable remembrance of the long lonely walk home he will have under the gloom of great elm-trees, past bleak waste grounds, or ghostly cross-roads. And when a move is begun, there are always a good many remarks, such as, 'Be you a-comin' wi' me, Bill?' or, 'I med just zo well come wi' you, Harry,' and no one has ever been known to accept Rube's challenge of, 'Wull, now, I'll be bothered if I wun't go up over now and zee if I can't zee nothin', if an one o' you wull come wi' me'—with which he always ends his story, whereby he has earned a cheap character for intrepidity. There are one or two sceptics, however, who profess not to believe a word of the whole story, averring that they believe that all Rube saw was Farmer Rook's old white horse, and that he got the whole thing up on purpose to scare people from going to get mushrooms there; which I think myself is quite within the bounds of probability.

When the blue haze of autumn lies over the distance, and the sun, that has lost its summer heat and brilliancy, steepes everything in a mellow light, he saunters along by the hedges, a big basket, on his arm, blackberrying. Every now and then he will put one in his mouth, closing one eye as he does so with the air of a connoisseur tasting a glass of rare wine.

Amongst his many failings, Rube possesses the rare virtue of a contented spirit. Wherever you meet him, whether sauntering over the downs on

a balmy evening, or ratting in a bleak field, with a bitter wind driving a cold sheet of rain in his face ; whether paddling with bare feet up the stream for cresses on a raw autumn day, or lying dozing in a hedge in the warm summer sun—his face always wears the same expression of humorous happy-go-lucky contentment. ‘It bain’t money nor good vittals as makes folks happy,’ Rube often observes ; ‘vur I’ve a zeen amany as hae got all, they lookin’ as zure as a dead mouse in a sink-hole ; it be the right way o’ lookin’ at things. Now, I don’t believe as there be anythin’ in the world as *I* wants myself, except—very insinuatingly—as you’d hae a bottle o’ my embrocation !’ For Rube is an inventor in his way. Besides the embrocation, he has invented a rattrap that will never work, and a mole-trap that is equally unsuccessful, though he himself will volubly assure you that ‘nothin’ ever worked pertier than they does ; and not long ago he appeared at Hayling’s Farm with an account of a wonderful rat poison he had invented. ‘Tis the most wunnerful ever you zee, ma’am ! I’ll warn’t it is ! Only vive shillen the bottle ! And wull kill every rat in the place ; and no cat nor dog wun’t touch it, nor no fowls ; but the rats wull eat it up zo greedy ; and it kills ‘em off afore they can zay Hullo ! You zay the word, ma’am, and I’ll bring you up zone, only vive shillen the bottle !

‘Very well, Rube ; you bring a bottle, and put it down ; and as soon as I see the rats dead, I’ll pay you.’

‘Ah ! But wunn’t zee ‘em ; they’ll hae crawled away to their holeses.’

‘But you say they die so quick ; and if nothing else won’t eat it, you can put it down in the middle of the rickust, or anywhere else away from their holes.’

A slight change came over Rube’s face. ‘Vurry well, ma’am, I’ll bring un,’ he replied cheerfully ; but though he has been to the farm on fifty different errands since, he has never yet brought that bottle of rat poison.

UNSUSPECTED DANGERS.

As if there were not already sufficient ills that flesh is heir to, quite a rage for discovering new ones appears to have set in, despite Shakespeare’s excellent advice that we should

Rather bear those ills we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of.

Were we to heed all that is written in these days of ultra-scientific research on what we have termed Unsuspected Dangers, we should live in a state of constant dread, and existence would become intolerable.

We have always considered walking to be one of the healthiest forms of exercise, but it appears, from a theory lately started by a French army doctor named Colin, that the shock caused by the heel of the boot striking the ground is extremely bad for the nervous system. Dr Colin, who has been making extensive experiments, declares that this constant jar, slight as it is, has in time a prejudicial effect on the spine and brain ; and to this is due a great part of the feeling of fatigue after long walks. Especially is this the case

with soldiers, who have considerable weight in arms and accoutrements to carry. In a day’s march of about twenty-one miles this shock is repeated about forty thousand times, and to this Dr Colin ascribes the frequent headaches suffered by the men after long marches. As a means of prevention the doctor proposes india-rubber heels.

This news is bad enough for man ; but poor woman has an additional cause for uneasiness, arising from the very ground on which she treads—the dust, mud, and other accumulations on pavements having been proved from recent investigation to contain bacilli of the most dangerous character. As if this were not sufficiently terrifying, a Viennese doctor has lately been experimenting with some grapes which he bought. After rinsing the dust from the grapes in pure spring water, he found the water very dirty. As an experiment he injected some of this water into three guinea-pigs. One died in two days of peritonitis ; the other two also died after a lapse of over a month. On examination, the bodies showed pronounced tuberculosis originating in the site of inoculation.

Man, however, comes in for his share, since an American chemist has discovered that there is death not only in the pot but in the pot-hat, and threatens us with lead-poisoning from the ‘sweat-band,’ as the glossy white leather lining which goes against the forehead is accurately if not euphoniously termed. This truth is endorsed by the statement of Dr James Startin of Harley Street, who promulgates the warning that eczema on men’s foreheads is often caused by their wearing hats the linings of which have been whitened and glazed with arsenic and other irritating substances. He recommends that the lining should be of silk or some soft undyed material. The discovery by Dr J. F. Geisler, the American chemist above mentioned, according to the *British Medical Journal*, came about in this wise. He bought a tall hat in New York, which there is termed a ‘stove-pipe,’ and which caused him more than the average amount of discomfort. One day the hat was accidentally exposed to an atmosphere containing sulphuretted hydrogen, and a discolouration of the sweat-band was noticed, which on examination was found to be due to the formation of sulphide of lead. Careful analysis of the band showed it to contain no less than 0·8585 grain of lead per square inch, or 37·548 grains for the whole band.

Nor are the children free, since it has been remarked that the wearing by them of red stockings coincides with pustular eruptions on their legs and feet. The Board of Health in Paris employed M. Schutzenberger, a chemical expert, to ascertain whether the dyes colouring the stockings contained poisonous matter. In his Report he says that all the many specimens submitted to him derived their red colour from matters obtained from aniline and containing a large proportion of antimonic acid. As children perspire freely, this matter enters into solution, and is thus taken into the pores. The Professor had no doubt that it was the cause of the pustular rash which accompanies the use of red stockings. The Board of Health thereupon reported in favour of the interdiction for wearing apparel of dyes obtained from metallic prepara-

tions. That this, at all events, is no cry of 'Wolf' was proved by the sad case of Mr Cronin, chief of the town police in Pretoria, South Africa, who in June last year was laid up with fever and a swelling that commenced with the feet and ankles, extended over the whole body till his eyes were nearly closed, the result, according to local medical opinion, of poisoning from coloured socks.

Another note of warning is sounded from South Africa to ladies who are given over to an inordinate love of bangles. Last January a Kaffir girl presented herself at Grey's Hospital, Kingwilliamstown, desiring that her arm should be amputated. It appeared that the bangles which she wore had so compressed the flesh as to produce extreme inflammation, and it became absolutely necessary that the arm should be amputated. The operation was successfully performed by Drs Blaine and Brownlee, and the patient will now no more wear ornaments on that arm at least. To such an extent will fashion, even amongst the dusky savages, enslave the fair sex.

The danger through arsenical poisoning in our homes is not confined to the wall-papers, having been found often present in cretonnes and imitation Indian muslin in poisonous quantities. A bad specimen of cretonne has yielded 'on analysis nineteen and a half grains of white arsenic, two and a half grains having been known to be a fatal dose. Some months back a London doctor experimented upon forty-four samples of cretonne supplied by a local tradesman, not one of which was absolutely free from the poison; eleven of them were grouped by the analyst as 'very bad,' and nine as 'distinctly dangerous.' It is quite a common occurrence to have pieces of these substances in a room containing sufficient arsenic to give one hundred people a fatal dose. A very popular impression has been that greens and blues are the dangerous colours, but the analyst declares that reds, browns, and blacks are more dangerous still. With relation to this matter, the following letter on arsenical poisoning through green candles was contributed to the *Times* in March 1889 by Major Leadbetter, Chief Constable of Denbighshire, and cannot be too widely published:

'A curious case came under my notice lately which, I think, is of public value. A children's party and Christmas tree resulted in most of the little people, and many of the older ones, being seized with symptoms of mineral poisoning. The fact of several who were present who had not partaken of food or liquid of any kind being in the number of those affected directed my attention to the coloured candles on the tree. These I had examined by the county analyst, Mr Lowe, of Chester, whose report is to the effect that the green candles were coloured with arsenical green, to the extent that every eight candles would contain one grain of arsenious anhydrite. He further reports that the red candles were coloured with vermillion. There is no doubt, therefore, that we had not farther to seek for an explanation of the symptoms—a crowded room, with the atmosphere charged with arsenical and mercurial fumes sufficiently accounting for it. It is only fair to state that I learn the candles were not of English manufacture, and were bought with the toys.'

A common cause of blood-poisoning was recently quoted by a doctor at one of the Berlin hospitals, to which institution a seamstress was admitted suffering from blood-poisoning, caused by using a common metal thimble, when she had a slight scratch on her finger. On examination, the thimble was found to have two or three small spots of verdigris inside. Commenting on this, the *Lancet* says: 'Steel thimbles are much safer, and cost very little. Another variety in common use is enamelled within, and is, if possible, freer from objection. Let us not forget to add a caution that cuts or scratches on the hand should never be neglected by sewing-women as long as dyes continue to be used in cloth manufacture.'

The foregoing are far from exhausting the stock of such recent disclosures: the drinking of tea is said to have an injurious effect upon the complexion, by darkening the skin and causing pimples; but what is perhaps the unkindest cut of all, a Berlin scientific gentleman informs us that danger lurks in a kiss. He has counted and classified the bacteria which lodge in the human mouth—some twenty-two distinct species. His conclusion is that persons who cannot abstain from so dangerous a habit as kissing should indulge in it through the medium of a respirator!

To know what we are ignorant of has always been deemed one of the chief pleasures arising from the study of the sciences, and if from time to time unpleasant truths be discovered, as they must be, it is a moot-question whether their publication is in every case beneficial or necessary; and though it is well to be forewarned, there are cases in which 'where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise.'

AN EVENING MUSING.

THE witching scents of thorn and orchard-blooms
Come blended on the soft cool airs that pass ;
Around my ears the fitful beetle booms,
And faintly lies the shadow on the grass.

The tree, transfigured by the parting rays,
Throws out the colours of the radiant bow ;
And o'er the heath-clad hills a glowing blaze
Doth added glory to the heights bestow.

Lo ! in the west the golden-coloured isles
Of fleecy cloudlets seem to lie and dream ;
The gazer looks with pleasure o'er the miles
So tiring in the early fervent beam.

The night-moths wander from the snow-white sprays
With aimless course ; and joyous fly and flit
Along the borders of the garden ways
Through odours thick where crocus-lamps are lit.

Sweet scents, sweet sights of pensive eventide,
We hail your reign, an earnest of that Shore
Where Love shall welcome those with sorrow tried,
And where the mourner shall not sorrow more.

WILLIAM J. GALLAGHER.

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